

REBEL DESTINY

[518] young. Once she, too, had liked to have her calf look round and full.

[437] "Will you exchange this bottle of palm oil for tobacco?"
[296] she asked, showing her empty clay pipe.

[514] She came in, saying she would like to rest, and began unfastening her top tunic so that she might make a pad of it on which to sit down on the ground, for the earth spirits forbid women who had reached puberty to sit upon the bare earth. In her second tunic, somewhat fresher than the top one, she stood hesitating, looking about her for a place to sit down, until we brought her a carved stool we had bought the day before. Instead of putting on the top pangi again, she used it to cover her knees.

[576] "Bat'a mays," she said, "white woman, you ought to cover your knees, too, when you sit."

And sitting there, examining us and our belongings, she muttered her comments about our appearance and dress as she smoked, and muttering she swayed slightly, until the swaying rhythm seemed to bring a melody into her head, and she began to sing.

[533] "The American Bat'a
Have come from far,
American kuni
Has brought them
To the Saramacca River,
To the Saramacca people;
They must not sicken
They must not die."

While the men on the shore talked and called upon their gods to keep them free, the woman rocked and sang this invocation for our safety, forgetting for the moment that we were whites, whom the ancestors hated.

"You have so much wealth," she said to the white man, looking about her at our provision boxes, "you must have many wives."

And back again she went to her song, repeating the words over and over, until seeing people approach she rose slowly and went back to the river where her rice was drying.

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716 kunu, which must kill his children. Was it safe to mention it? A chance question was asked.

"Nothing will happen to my children, Bak'a. They will belong to my wife's family. It is my sister's children that things will happen to."

Bayo paused for a moment on the path, and stood in thought. Was it that he wished to be entirely honest with his friend? Was it that to confess the truth was too difficult for him? Whatever the reason, his next remark indicated a compromise.

"Nothing will happen to my children. Those of my younger brother will die, but not mine."

584 The conversation came back to the less painful subject of betrothal. Whatever the reason for accepting this boy whose kunu brought such supernatural risk, the match had apparently been satisfactory to the family of the girl, and they had sent word that the marriage would not displease them.

"Now I am earning the money I need, and later I will make the things I must give my girl and her family."

583 There was, first of all, the work to be done for Bayo's prospective mother-in-law. He might have to help her with repairs on her house, or assist her in clearing a field. Before he was married he would have to go into the bush and cut the two fields for his wife, one for rice and one for cassava, which a married woman must have, and in addition he would have to cut an extra field for the mother of his wife.

"I must do it so they can be sure that I am strong, and can take care of their girl when I marry her. But I will not have any trouble!"

Before that, however, Bayo would have to see to the carvings which a man had to have for marrying.

• [A39] "I do not like to carve. But I have friends who will carve for me while I go hunting for them!" That was the way to solve such difficulties. When the carvings were assembled he would have to make a boat for his girl. Bayo was not yet certain, but he thought that another boat would have to be made for his mother-in-law. Then

- 301 his much-loved ornamentation. Leg-bands of cotton cloth are frequently worn by both sexes, and where wire can be secured it is fashioned into arm or leg coils and paraded proudly.
- 551 Many necklaces and bracelets are used because they constitute magic amulets against evil spirits. Our own bracelets and necklaces can probably be traced back to this same origin.
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- 302 The hair is another means of personal decoration, and therefore it is always dressed with deliberation. Carefully made partings divide the black skull into geometrical designs.
- 934 Despite the scanty nature of their clothing, the Djukas are quite modest, and never expose themselves. If a babkra does, they avert their heads. It is a curious reflection on civilized morality that the almost naked blacks possess a large amount of dignified restraint, while the uncomfortably clothed white man is shameless in his nudity.



- 322 Here and there inside the dark huts can be seen bits of extraordinary wood carving. These are not crude utensils; every stirring-paddle or comb is a work of art worthy of a place in a museum, designed and executed in a way that is
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- 487 far from "primitive." The only way to acquire these objects is to bargain for them in Dutch money or tobacco, or cheap knick-knacks. Among the more distant villages money is use-

The Jungle Clearing

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less. Blue beads are very effective in bargaining, for blue is ⁴³⁷ the Djukas's favourite colour. Ear-rings are also good, but not ^[132] perfume; they prefer the acrid odour of insecticides.

The Djukas bargain shrewdly, and are greedy in exactly the sense that children are. The trading begins in the dark interior of a hut, where a Bush Negro lolls in his hammock.

We say: "*Me wanny buy timber*"—"I want to buy wooden pieces."

The Negro's common reply is that he has none to part with: "*Me no habbe, massa*." The word *massa* is a corruption of "master," a vestige of the slave days.

We point to a pierced and inlaid stool and say "*How many?*" meaning, how much does he want for it.

"*Me no wanny fu sell*"—"I don't want to sell it."

To show him we mean business, a concrete offer is made, "*Me gon gibbe six banknote*"—"I'm going to give six banknote."

The bargaining is in silver half-guilder pieces, called *banknote*. The Djukas do not understand large sums of money, except when counted in half-guilder pieces.

If he refuses six coins, we offer seven, eight, nine, and throw in the added temptation of some tobacco leaves. To each of these offers he shakes his head in negation, saying doggedly, "No, no."

Finally, in a tone of voice that indicates we are amazed at our own generosity, we say: "*Me gon gibbe tens banknote, nanga twee weefee tabak*"—"I'm going to give ten banknote, as well as three leaves of tobacco."

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Djuka

437 The reply is short and spirited.

"Gimme."

Which does not have to be translated.



579 We sleep that night in the Bush Negro village. A dilapi-
 604 dated hut is assigned us, the hut of a dead man. There are
 134 tarantulas on the cross-poles; we are not particular. The pad-
 dlers sleep elsewhere, being taken into friendly huts about
 the village. Except for the ghosts of the departed Bush Ne-
 groes, our hut is quite empty. The hammock is slung and the
 mosquito netting put in place. Mosquitoes and insect pests
 are not as bad in the jungle as commonly reported. They sel-
 dom caused us any discomfort. It is true that one of the boys
 contracted malaria during an expedition, but the parasites
 may have been dormant in his blood for some time pre-
 viously. Our precaution against malaria was ten grains of
 quinine sulphate each night before retiring under the mos-
 quito netting.

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 [21] Far into the evening the Negroes will sit around the camp-
 fire and tell stories, their loud, musical Negro laughter car-
 rying a long distance on the night air. Walking by each hut
 we see a tiny light flickering inside. Occasionally an infant
 cries. We sit before our doorway, amusing a group of chil-

313 hardwood trunks must be fastened between soft logs to keep them up.

At times the river drops in sheer falls. There is only one point at which the rafts can go down without jamming on the rocks; but here the men cannot go over with them, for the drop is too great. They steer for this point, keeping the logs in the centre of the current. To go over would mean being crushed to death. Moving at a high rate of speed, the men stay with the raft until the last possible minute, and then jump for some jutting rock. The raft crashes over the falls. Then the paddlers make their way from rock to rock, along the crest of the falls, back to the shore, and go down to recover the logs.

317 The Djukas sell the lumber that they bring downstream; it takes three days of palaver to reach an agreement on the price. They bargain quite as shrewdly as the lumber trader. Now their pouches of canvas, waterproofed with wild rubber, are heavy with many silver bunkono, or half-guilder pieces. Not as many as they expected, perhaps, but enough for their purposes.

318 They walk curiously about Paramaribo. The streets are crowded with a bizarre rabble, giving this little Dutch town the rare charm of the exotic. A more interesting place would be difficult to find in this modern age. Its wharves are reminders of the coming of the old slaving ships, and its white houses recall the plantations of the past. Town Negroes clatter by, some in wooden shoes brought from the Zuyder Zee countryside to this distant clime. Behind them come

The Game Trail

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barefooted sinuous Javanese in their *awangs* and *splendangs* on of batik. Some stores in the town are kept by Chinese. Hindus in cloth turbans, and their wives with jewelled rings through their noses, rub elbows with juffrows from Amsterdam. Here and there a copper-coloured Carib Indian adds to the strangeness of the street scene.

The Javanese are brought over in boat-loads, indentured for five years to pay their passage. After this they may return to the tea fields of Java if they like, or remain in Surinam to cultivate a piece of land which is given them. East Indians were formerly brought over in large numbers from India, but the British put a stop to this importation in both British and Dutch Guiana. The Chinese bring themselves. The only race in the colony never transported is the Indian, indigenous to the country. All these races keep the dress and, where possible, the habits of their native land. They do not mingle with each other, and seldom intermarry. The one language common to all is talker-talker.

There is one civic privilege accorded the Bush Negro in 477 ● Paramaribo. He may camp for the night behind the store that he trades with during the day. The Bush Negroes always stop at the hardware store, run by the Moravian Brothers, to buy some bottle-shaped flasks of good *manassany* (gun-powder). Along with the powder they purchase empty shot-^[41]gun shells, that they themselves will fill. A number of other purchases are made: shot, percussion caps, tobacco, salt, cloth, an iron implement, and perhaps a mirror. When night falls, the Djukas return to the hardware store and camp behind it,

- 437 sleeping in their own hammocks slung under a shed provided for the purpose by the company. The next day they make their way back up the river, in the curial which they brought down with them tied behind the raft. They bring back no money; it is useless.



242 Cassava is very filling; yams are sweet; martepe oil gives a sense of well-being; peanuts are pleasant while palavering; a few pieces of bahkra candy are toothsome to eat, but still the pot lacks meat. A slice of the white breast of a bush turkey, the *powee*, or a piece of the carcass of a red howler, or a slice of fat meat from the tapir or bush cow, or the second joint of *moom*, the bush hen, or the sweet Djuka substitute for ham, *pingo*, the peccary—these are morsels that black men dream about.

224 After resting a few days, one of the blacks wishes to try
789 out his new gunpowder, and makes preparation for a hunt.

The bahkra powder is too strong for the thin walls of his [41] cheap shotgun. He dilutes it with charcoal, adding a bit of pemba dotee, the sacred white clay, to help the shot find the game. A bit of dried nekku leaf from the medicine man adds to the straightness of the aim. The gun likewise must be sprinkled with high wine, squirted from the mouth. All

/32 cont. / *Like a family of Bush Negroes*

439 lands at a plantation with raft of timber, the man goes on land,
 • 437 but according to old plantation custom, may not go farther than
 up to the residence of the overseer, who inquires about the
 species and the prices per foot (the prices vary a great deal de-
 pending on quality and thickness). As a rule he is not satisfied
 with the asking price and bargains until the seller contents him-
 self with 40 cents for timber of 64.

When the sale has been concluded, the overseer per-
 mits the timber raft to be brought into the plantation creek, which
 is then subsequently, after the conclusion of the work in the fields,
 hauled to shore in the evening with the help of the Negroes of the
 plantation.

The following morning the timber is inspected and
 measured, and ordinarily, no matter how good the timber is or
 how fully it /33/ agrees with the description given by the seller,
 many faults are found, and the original offer is brought down to
 32 or 24 cents a foot.

What must the poor Bush Negro do now? To take the
 timber back is difficult, a sheer impossibility, for, since he is
 ordinarily there with his wife and a few children, they are too
 few in number to haul the large pieces 25 to 40 feet long and
 7/7 to 10/10 thumbs wide from the shore into the water again.
 He is thus entirely dependent upon the good will and the help
 of the overseer and the field workers of the plantation. To leave
 it there is equally difficult, for quite possibly, if he returns with
 some of his fellow tribesmen to help, he is not permitted to haul
 the timber off. He thus accepts the low offer. But with that the
 deceptions are not yet at an end. The agreement now being con-
 cluded for good, the measuring is done next, and it is truly not
 an unusual phenomenon that a measure of six feet, which the
 Bush Negro is told has a length of only five feet, is used for this
 purpose.

These frauds of a more or less punishable sort, alas,
 take place all too frequently, and during my five years of planta-
 tion life I was an eyewitness to them several times. Is it thus to
 be wondered at that these people, after having been repeatedly
 defrauded, should likewise try to do so to the Whites,

/33 cont./

639 When, for instance, the Bush Negro has cut down a
 tree deep in the forest and discovers that it is almost hollow on
 the inside, then he works it, this defect notwithstanding, into a
 squared log, taking care to make the visible cavities above and
 below invisible by hammering wooden pins into it. After that he
 takes clay and mud and is able to make every trace disappear, a
 fraud which is thus rarely discovered before a piece is sawed off
 the log.

Also they practice a great deal of deception by unload-
 ing on the buyer as good stuff various qualities of timber of great
 and little value, but which resemble each other, for instance,
 by selling a low quality black habben (1) for brown hardwood (2).

1. Andira retusa H. B. K.

2. Andira called waulla among the
 Arawakken /Arawak/ Indians.

two varieties which can be distinguished only by timber experts.

/34/ If they have worked timber that on one side is
 already somewhat rotten, or is worm-eaten or split, then they
 know how to place it in such a way in their rafts that the good
 side lies upward, a deception that can be discovered only when
 it has been hauled ashore and one becomes aware of it by turning
 each piece around and inspecting it carefully.

816 If it is possible to steal something from the Whites,
 648 they will not fail to do so. They are also guilty of lying and give
 themselves the names of those who still possess the confidence
 of the Whites, which they can do with impunity because the
 similarity of their coloring and facial features makes it extremely
 difficult for the Whites to recognize them after an absence.

[829] This repeated trickery has accordingly made the Whites
 declare them to be scoundrels and liars, but the Bush Negroes,
 although they do not do so openly, say the same of them and
 577 regard themselves as much more trustworthy and honest. That they
 do this with some appearance of justice cannot be denied; after

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776 cont. /

No form of trade (1) is traditionally observed among them.

1. Since 1954, one of them, enriched by boat transport, set up a food business at Kariha, but this is a man more than half 'civilized' and one who established himself in the midst of Creoles.

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[135]
this activity being for them manifestly tied to the idea of the exploitation of others; there is not even any market in the villages. Each person produces, or finds among the people of his own lineage, what food he needs; as for imported objects, the Boni buy them in the course of their trips from the coast traders. That plague of African societies, pseudo-trade or parasitism, is unknown to the Refugee Blacks. Just as one meets among them neither ragamuffins nor beggars, one perceives nothing nasty or low in their social relations.

In their collective life there is something aboveboard, clean, which strikes one on first meeting them and which one does not tire of admiring, the further one penetrates into the functioning of their institutions.